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Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865–1911

Kathleen F. McConnell

San Jose State University, kathleen.mcconnell@sjsu.edu

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Jessica Enoch, *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), ix + 225 pp. $35.00 (paper).

One of the objectives Jessica Enoch has for her history of nineteenth century teachers is to show that the women upon whom she focuses do indeed "have a place inside the history of rhetorical education," (11). Enoch meets her goal with an important contribution to histories of contemporary rhetorical education, one that challenges the conventions of standard historical accounts. She accomplishes this by providing a compelling argument for the importance of several lesser-known and under-studied figures and archives. The more valuable aspect of her study, however, lies in how she constructs an analytical lens that productively combines race, gender, and critical pedagogical theories and how she brings that lens to bear on questions of interest to rhetorical scholars. The scope of her book highlights several limitations of standard histories, such as their exclusive focus on post-secondary institutions and her analysis models ways we might productively engage alternative histories.

Refiguring Rhetorical Education is an analysis of the rhetorical pedagogies of five teachers: Lydia Maria Child a white woman from Massachusetts who wrote textbooks for post-war southern schools; Zitkala-Ša, a Sioux woman from South Dakota who attended and taught at The Indian Industrial School in Carlisle Pennsylvania; and Jovita Idar, Marta Peña, and Leonor Villegas, all of whom were Chicana, lived in both Mexico and Laredo, Texas, and who published articles about education in *La Crónica*. By bringing these teachers together into one study and drawing connections between their approaches to education and those of late-twentieth century critical pedagogical theorists, Enoch's project reflects the sort of geographical range that her subjects lived. The educational policies that dictated much nineteenth century curricula reflected then dominant beliefs about gender and race; but as Enoch shows, these teachers revised educational materials and classroom practices to better suit the educational goals they themselves had set for their students. Those revisions resisted against the racist and sexist assumptions of the day and offered a different set of answers for how to shape and execute rhetorical education, answers responsive to the specific civic cultures in which they taught.

It is a credit to Enoch that her analysis makes visible the diverse subject positions these teachers negotiated without losing sight of her focus on rhetorical education. Even while she constructs points of commonality between them, she does so without attempting to repair the contradictions each woman lived or equating the kinds of discrimination each faced. Due to her mindfulness toward their differences, *Refiguring Rhetorical Education* serves as a useful example of how to weave together myriad themes and subjects across historical expanses, one that gives reason against prescribed templates for such work.

Where many histories of rhetorical education attend to those who shaped the post-secondary study of rhetoric, such as the Bolyston Professors of Rhetoric and Oratory, Enoch focuses instead on grammar and secondary school teachers. In doing so, she joins Shirley Wilson Logan, Jacqueline Bacon, Glen McClish, and William M. Keith in demonstrating why histories of modern rhetorical education cannot assume that education derived fully from university curricula and "trickled down" to the lower grades or adult education programs.[1] Enoch broadly defines rhetorical education as any program through which people learn behaviors that "make possible their participation in communal and civic affairs" (173). This definition is inclusive of educational initiatives that developed in response to sociopolitical constraints other than the

theoretical and disciplinary shifts taking place within the university, including segregationist policies that prevented non-Anglo students from attending or teaching college. Due to those and other realities of structural racism, histories that focus exclusively on post-secondary education omit the contributions these populations made to rhetorical study and seldom attend to the impact racism has had on American education. As Enoch explains, the "historiographic prerogative," that leads historians to attend only to "how enfranchised men accessed exclusive schools" marks a broader failure to recognize how gendered and racist ideas and practices have shaped education in every era and at every level (9). In showing how early educators built standardized curricula infused with racialized and gendered discourses, Enoch's study gives detail to Henry Giroux and Susan Searls Giroux's argument that race and gender "cannot be addressed as a discourse removed from mainstream educational theory, a burden imposed from the outside by the forces of multiculturalism or 'PC'."[2]

Enoch organizes her book around close readings of instructional materials and popular news articles written by Child, Zitkala-Ša, Idar, Peña, and Villegas. The three middle chapters of *Refiguring Rhetorical Education* focus on Child, Zitkala-Ša, and Idar, Peña, and Villegas respectively and place analytic emphasis on how the racial subjectivities of each influenced the rhetorical pedagogies they developed. The final chapter takes a broader perspective to analyze the impact of the female teacher on rhetorical education, a theme Enoch also incorporates into each chapter.

Her introductory chapter provides a compelling explanation of how the gender and race of her subjects is relevant to the rhetorical pedagogies they developed. She argues that these five teachers did not merely make available standard rhetorical pedagogies, but "invented new forms of rhetorical education that aimed to reshape dominant power structures by considering how issues of race, language, and culture inflect every aspect of this pedagogical program" (7). To show how they did so, Enoch argues, requires attending to the multiple subject positions of the teachers themselves. As she explains, teaching was a highly gendered profession in the nineteenth century and the social expectations for women teachers served as both a constraint upon and source of inspiration for Child, Zitkala-Ša, Idar, Peña, and Villegas. Attending to their racial subjectivities, Enoch continues, was equally necessary since those identities also shaped, to different effect, the educational concerns and pedagogical practices of each. Where many accounts of rhetorical education tend to note racial difference only when people of color enter or intersect with dominant institutions, and then evaluate those contributions against the practices of those institutions, Enoch's considers how race functioned as an organizing component in education. She takes into account, for instance, the impact of English-only educational policies and bi-lingual educational efforts that comprised some of the teaching experiences of the figures upon which she focuses. By comparing the teaching strategies of Child, Zitkala-Ša, Idar, Peña, and Villegas with the educational policies of white, male, enfranchised educators who held a majority say in shaping the educational experiences of most students, Enoch shows how the pedagogical strategies of the five teachers each represent "*resistances* to *dominant discourses of education*" (24). This comparison enables Enoch to demonstrate the specific ways in which Child, Zitkala-Ša, Idar, Peña, and Villegas revised or rejected prevailing dictates. A comparison of dominant educational discourses and texts produced by these teachers "provide evidence," Enoch elaborates, "of these teachers' pedagogical negotiations, their creativity, and their arguments for change—all of which [are forms of] resistance" (26).

Evidence of express instruction for civic participation is strongest in chapter two, which is devoted to Lydia Maria Child. Child is not an obscure figure in education history, but Enoch

brings into relief the rhetorical angle of Child's textbook, *The Freedmen's Book*. Child wrote her textbook specifically for students who attended the southern freedmen schools, approximately 3,000 of which were built after the Civil War to help those who had been emancipated from slavery. Child's commitment to publishing a textbook for the freedmen schools despite her inability to move to the south and teach, as she hoped to do, is a testament to how women leveraged their social positions despite the limited occupational opportunities available to them.

Enoch argues that what distinguishes Child's textbook as *rhetorical* instruction is its departure from the dominant curricula of other freedman school materials. Before turning to her analysis of Child, Enoch details the educational policies of the American Missionary Association (AMA) and the American Tract Society (ATS), the two institutions that influenced most the curriculum at freedmen schools. The AMA and the ATS delineated the function of the freedman school as instilling civilizing behaviors marked by "obedience, acceptance, and passivity" (42). Through an analysis of educational pamphlets and teacher instruction manuals, Enoch shows how educators translated these policies into lessons designed to encourage particular habits in students. As she points out, however, the effectiveness of these curricula in accomplishing the goals of the AMA and ATS was due as much to the narrow range of materials and schooling options as to any specific dictate.

What makes Child's textbook remarkable by comparison is how it "rejects any instructional tactic that drills into [students] a politically weak option for public engagement" (53). Child did not overtly oppose the policies of the AMA and ATS. Instead, she composed a reader that favored secular over religious voices, did not universalize her own authorial voice, and that included selections from black as well as white writers, and female as well as male. As a "multivocal" collection of clashing opinions, Enoch argues, *The Freedmen's Book* offered students "a robust inventory of new and more potent rhetorical models for political engagement and intervention" (53). Thus did Child advance a rhetorical pedagogy by designing a textbook notable for how it enacted, rather than espoused, civic engagement. The form of the book, Enoch argues, prompted students to evaluate opposing arguments, to pay attention to motive, and to invent their own analysis of historical events thus enabling them to formulate their own political positions. Since the textbook did not present a unified perspective, it provided a counter-discourse to those rhetorical pedagogies that equated decorum with normative social expectations. This, rather than Child's own contributions to the textbook which tended to echo in part the educational messages of the AMA and ATS, is how *The Freedmen's Book* resisted dominant discourses.

Enoch also argues that Child's reader is notable for how it inverts the function of marking race. Where standard educational materials of the time marked race in order to reinforce racial differences and to rationalize racist social structures, Child notes the race of each featured author in her reader so that, as she explains in her preface, students could have models from which to draw inspiration for social change. In her table of contents, Child placed an asterisk by the names of those authors who were black thus effectively making visible the race of all the authors. This curious feature allowed students to choose authors with whom they identified rather than have an author construct their identity for them.

Where Enoch's analysis of Child primarily highlights the form of her textbook, the focus of the chapter on Zitkala-Ša is a series of critiques of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School penned by the school's former star student and teacher. Her analysis of Child connects *The Freedman's Book* to specific pedagogical concerns of the rhetorical tradition and shows how Child constructs alternative strategies for meeting these goals. Unlike her reading of Child,

Enoch's textual analysis of Zitkala-Ša is more in service to the presentation of historical evidence than it is to identifying particular rhetorical resources. Nevertheless, the chapter delivers a number of insights into the harm done by disavowal of students' multi-cultural subjectivities and by the institution of English-only language policies.

Zitkala-Ša's contributions to a specifically rhetorical education are less apparent and to appreciate how Enoch frames Zitkala-Ša's writings as such, it is again important to note Enoch's broad definition of rhetorical education. By her definition, it includes "*any* instruction in language practice, rhetorical strategy, or social and bodily behavior that prepares students to enter into public discussion" (172). Working from that definition, Enoch argues that the importance of Zitkala-Ša's campaign against the Carlisle School lies in how she "claimed rhetorical sovereignty…for the rights of Indians to speak for themselves" (110). In making this claim, Zitkala-Ša worked against sexist as well as racist precepts that limited Indian women teachers to instruction of Indian students. Defying educational convention and in anticipation of multi-cultural education, Zitkala-Ša published a reader, *Old Indian Legends*, intended for white students.

The more compelling part of the third chapter is Enoch's too brief discussion of the effects of what she calls the "corporeality of rhetorical education" (117). The objective of the Carlisle School was to prepare its students for engagement in American society by instilling in them the ideals and behaviors of Anglo norms. That pedagogy, Enoch argues, worked against instruction in democratic civic practice by insisting that students forsake all aspects of an Indian identity thus constricting the resources from which students, as citizens, might draw. Student makeovers included painstaking alteration of bodily habits, a physical process the school administered to make students "a suitable part of the body politic" (116). This instruction and the ways in which Zitkala-Ša resisted against it, Enoch argues, provide a critical cultural perspective on "the physical aspect of what it means to enter rhetorical space and what it means to become part of the citizen body" (116). This perspective is a valuable corrective to traditional rhetorical pedagogies that only provide instruction in normative techniques of speech delivery.

The theme of physicality and its importance to rhetorical education carries to the fourth chapter. The chapter on Idar, Peña, and Villegas provides the same level of detailed historical context of the previous two and builds on insights in the preceding chapters by offering additional examples of the bilingual and bicultural materials these teachers developed. It also highlights how Idar, Peña, and Villegas utilized their gendered roles as teachers to make transformative contributions to the communities of which they were a part. Each woman wrote articles for a Spanish language newspaper, *La Crónica*, based out of Laredo, Texas as well as to other local publications. These articles stemmed from their work in providing alternatives to the segregated Texas schools. Idar, for instance, campaigned and raised money for private schools while Villegas opened a bilingual kindergarten. As with the work of Child and Zitkala-Ša, these activities resisted the stereotypes of Mexican immigrants that were prominent in dominant discourse. Where Zitkala-Ša subverted the image of the savage Indian in need of civilization, Idar, Peña, and Villegas opposed calls for Chicanos to Americanize in ways that diminished the role Mexican culture played in the lives of Chicano-Americans.

As a specifically rhetorical education, the pedagogies advanced by Idar, Peña, and Villegas reconceptualized the ideal rhetor as one capable of border crossing: in a literal sense, moving between Mexico and the United States, and in a figurative sense, movement across multiple linguistic, and ideological terrains. Working against the standard curricula of racially segregated schools that limited instruction to vocational training and assimilation into American

culture, Idar, Peña, and Villegas directed their comments about education to audiences in both Mexico and the U.S. They often hailed their Texas audience as Mexicans and advanced arguments in favor of education that would better equip students to move between both countries. This "movement" between countries, Enoch explains, was as conceptual in nature as physical. Peña, for instance, "constructs a way for [students] to envision the workings of the Mexican government inside the Texas border" by connecting Mexican citizenship to family obligations (151). Villegas, likewise, wrote equally celebratory articles on both Mexican and Anglo-European cultures thus countering the tendency to legitimize one over the other by presenting them as a choice. These strategies, Enoch argues, productively complicate audience analysis and resist the notion that rhetors can hail only one aspect of their audiences' identity.

Enoch concludes by arguing that the significance of Child, Zitkala-Ša, Idar, Peña, and Villegas' work lies in how it complicates our understanding of learning processes, schooling practices, and rhetorical instruction. By highlighting both the strategies employed by each and the marginal positions these teachers occupied, Enoch challenges the convention within histories of rhetorical education that asks, simply, what have we learned from famous rhetorical theorists? Enoch suggests instead that we broaden our inquiry to ask, "How have people learned to participate in civic, communal, and cultural discussions?" (173). As *Refiguring Rhetorical Education* demonstrates, such a historiographic approach may yield few unqualified precepts. Nevertheless, it may prove a rich resource for rhetorical invention.

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[1] Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish, "Reinventing the Master's Tools: Nineteenth-Century African-American Literary Societies of Philadelphia and Rhetorical Education," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 30 (200): 19–47; Shirley Wilson-Logan, "To Get an Education and Teach My People," Cheryl Glenn, Margaret Lyday, and Wendy B. Sharer, eds., *Rhetorical Education in America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004, 36–54; William M. Keith, *Democracy as Discussion: Civic Education and the American Forum Movement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 263–70. In Keith, see in particular the discussion of John Studebaker, a Superintendent of Instruction in the public schools who spearheaded the Federal Forum Project, an adult education program.

[2] Henry A. Giroux and Susan Searls Giroux. *Take Back Higher Education: Race, Youth, and the Crisis of Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2004), 143.